

THE USE OF ASPECT IN A GWICH'IN NARRATIVE

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THE USE OF ASPECT IN A GWICH'IN NARRATIVE

A

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Abstract

This work is an investigation of the role of viewpoint aspect in highlighting and foregrounding information in discourse, and in structuring narrative discourse within a Gwich'in narrative. The purpose is to contribute to a clearer understanding of how aspect functions cross-linguistically. The focus of the analysis is on the perfective/imperfective contrast which involves speaker choice. The findings are that there is an interesting correlation between shift in narrative episode and shift in viewpoint aspect, and additionally, that the use of the perfective does highlight and mark significant information in the narrative. The study also examines the narrative in terms of proposed universals in narrative structure, as outlined by Labov, but does not find enough evidence to support his claims in Gwich'in.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, linguists have become increasingly interested in the structure of discourse, and anthropologists have long recognized the value of narratives in revealing patterns of cultural belief and practices. As naturally bound unit of discourse, narratives have been examined for linguistic markers which demonstrate how information is organized: specifically, the relationship between those linguistic markers and narrative structure. While many scholars have discussed the constraints that inherent aspectual meaning puts on a verb's derivational potential, few have examined the consequences of these constraints in discourse. Most studies involving universal theories of aspect use and discourse structure do not include the Athabascan languages which have complex aspect systems. My objective in undertaking this analysis is to begin to find answers to the following questions: Does aspect function to structure information in discourse in terms of sequencing and foregrounding of events, in Gwich'in? Does it have a direct relationship with global discourse phenomena? Is the function of aspect in discourse in Gwich'in the same as that of Koyukon?

The primary orientation of the majority of the work on aspect in the Athabascan languages so far has been the formal description of the aspect system (both situation and viewpoint aspect: see definitions below) in terms of morphology, phonology and grammatical rules. A great deal of analytic and comparative work has been done on the inflectional morphology of the Athabascan verb, and is available in published form. The primary focus of this paper is with aspect on the discourse level.

My analysis focuses on the perfective/imperfective contrast. I examine the functioning of this contrast within a Gwich'in narrative, and look at how it is used in terms of highlighting and foregrounding information in

discourse. The purpose is to contribute to a clearer understanding of how aspectual systems function in discourse cross-linguistically, by investigating the particular use in an Athabascan language.

This paper includes a review of the literature including a discussion on aspect in general, and aspect in Athabascan; a survey of verb structure for Athabascan verbs; discourse analysis; narrative organization and ethnopoetics; a description of data, methods and an introduction to the narrative I chose to examine. The last section includes my data and analysis. Appendix I is a discourse structure of the narrative and appendix II provides a free translation of the narrative.

1.1 Background

The Gwich'in are the most linguistically distinct from other Athabascan language groups in Alaska (Michael Krauss 1974). Richard Slobodin (1981) has characterized them as well as having a strong "consciousness of kind." They live in the Northeast interior Alaska in the upper Yukon and Porcupine River region and adjacent northwest Canada as far East as the Arctic Red River. There are several communities of Gwich'in in Alaska and Canada that were historically grouped into about nine or ten regional bands, each associated with a major river or tributary (Ibid.).

Historically, the fundamental unit of social organization was the nuclear family. The recognized political unit in pre-Euroamerican times was the regional band of 100-200 or so individuals whose hunting and gathering activities typically centered on a river drainage for which they were named. Contemporary villages have supplanted the regional band as functional socio-territorial units in Gwich'in society (Osgood 1936: 86 f, Slobodin, 1981). The term "gwich'in" means 'dwellers in an area' and refers to regional band territory. The inhabitants of the Chandalar River region where Arctic Village

and Venetie are located are the Neets'ait Gwich'in (Ibid.).

My interest in the Gwich'in language began when I first took a course in Gwich'in from Lillian Garnett of Arctic Village. I initially took two semesters of the language, and then a year later began taking some additional conversation-oriented courses which were offered as second year Gwich'in. The narrative I have examined for this thesis was one that my teacher used as an in-class exercise for purposes of teaching her language, and is an original Gwich'in text by Katherine Peter (1975). *Tr'injaa* is more of a cultural document than a traditional story, but contains many story elements such as drama, humor, and moral overtones. It describes the transition time of girls becoming women in the old times and the particular rites and rituals surrounding this process. While focusing on the specifics involved, it frames these specifics in a larger context of community versus individual, and emphasizes the interdependence of these states, and how easily this relationship can be thrown out of balance.

2. Literature review

In this section I present a brief review of the literature on aspect in general, aspect in Athabascan, and Athabascan verb structure. I also review some global approaches to discourse analysis, narrative definition and organization, and ethnopoetics.

2.1 Introduction to aspect

Aspect is typically understood as the category of the verb that designates the relation of an action to the passage of time. A great deal has been written about aspect in general, and a meaningful discussion of this material would require a thesis of its own. Here, I will briefly introduce and discuss the general concept of aspect. A brief survey of the literature will also attempt to clarify the main points and provide a framework within which to focus my analysis.

The modern concept of aspect was established only as recently as the 1930s (Binnick, 1991). Binnick notes "Aspect is challenging to define and explain..." (1991: 43 f) another author put it: "If there is one thing that all analysts of aspect systems agree on, it is the degree of confusion in this area, both in the terminology and in the principles which should govern the analysis of this type of verb-inflection system" (Midgette 1987: 19).

Although aspect exists in English, it is not grammaticized as such (i.e. Comrie notes that while aspectual distinctions exist in English, it is not a fully developed grammatical category in this language as it is in the Slavic languages for example)(Smith 1983, Comrie, 1976). And although "aspect" has been referred to as a concept for 2500 years, the term "aspect" appeared for the first time in English in 1853 (Oxford English Dictionary). The notion of aspect as a distinct inflectional category pertaining to temporal semantics emerged in early studies of Slavic verb systems in the late nineteenth century.

Aspect is overtly marked in Slavic languages, but not in western European ones, and the term itself was a loan translation from the Slavic meaning “vid” (view) (Brinton 1988). It was Jacob Grimm who first extended the concept of aspect to non-Slavic languages (Ibid.). Tense, in distinction, is often considered natural to English speakers, who have little difficulty translating this familiar usage to new languages. As Binnick states, however, “aspect is not a traditional concept in the same way, and speakers of most European languages have no very clear notions concerning it. Nonetheless it is equal in importance to tense for the purpose of understanding how temporal relations are expressed in language” (1991: 135).

Smith (1983) who has written extensively on aspect, specifies a single meaning parameter for it: the contrast between an internal and external viewpoint of the situation. For Smith “Aspect is the semantic domain of temporal point of view in language” (p. 20). That is, aspect provides the *meaning* of the temporal viewpoint taken about a situation. In her discussion of aspectual categories in Navajo (1996), she notes that the domain of aspect includes perfective and imperfective viewpoint, and situation types such as event and state.

Smith further points out that recent work has shown that covert linguistic categories are associated with events and states in the grammars of many languages. She refers to them as “situation types,” using ‘situation’ as a general term for events and states. She asks whether such categories hold for the Navajo language and, if so, how they are expressed. The question is particularly interesting because Navajo has a set of morphological categories known as “aspectual” in the literature. She asks how these morphological categories relate to situation types and seeks to determine their other functions in the aspectual system of the Navajo language (Smith, 1983). In

defining situation types, she refers to the distinction Aristotle made between static and dynamic situations. Later scholars have added the features of duration and telicity. [+ or - Telic and + or - Durative.] Telicity distinguishes events which have a natural goal or endpoint, with a concomitant change of state, from events with arbitrary endpoints (see examples below).

The classifications Smith describes she claims are based in human perceptual and cognitive abilities. The interesting point for linguistic analysis is that sentences which present situations of different types may have reflexes in the grammar of a language. Vendler (1957) in a now classic article showed that a cluster of syntactic properties characterizes sentences that show states and events of each type. Situation types are very general semantic categories representing classes of idealized situations, organized according to their semantic temporal features. These features have grammatical correlates: the sentences that realize each situation type have a set of distributional properties, e.g., co-occurrence with certain adverbials, verbs, aspectual viewpoints, and other forms. Thus the situation types are covert linguistic categories in the sense of Whorf (1956) (Ibid.).

Smith argues that situation types must be established separately for each language. The temporal features +Dynamic (Dynamic/Static), + or - Durative (Durative/Instantaneous), and +Telic (Telic/Atelic) play a role in many languages. She presents a list of situation types according to these features, with some examples of each. These situation types hold for English, and for a number of other languages:

Situation Types: States: static (*own the farm, know the answer, love Mary*)

Events: dynamic: Activities: durative, atelic (*laugh, push a cart, walk by the river*) Accomplishments: durative, telic (*build a house, walk to work, learn*

Greek) Semelfactives: instantaneous, atelic (*tap, cough, flap a wing*)

Achievements: instantaneous, telic (*burst a balloon, reach the top*)

These examples present clear cases of each situation type. In talking about a situation in the world, a speaker invokes a given situation type by using the linguistic forms associated with it. (1996: 310).

Further, Smith notes that the verb and its arguments, or verb constellation, convey the concept of a situation, just as a noun, *apple* for instance, conveys the concept {apple}. Verb constellations are associated with the situation types of a language. Since certain temporal semantic features are intrinsic to a given situation concept, they are expressed by the verb constellation.

For a particular language, a situation type is grammaticized if the verb constellations that express it have a consistent and unique set of distributional properties. To investigate the situation types of Navajo, Smith looks at sentences that express intuitively clear cases. For instance, {burst a balloon} is a clear case of an instantaneous event, one that has no duration in principle. Therefore, she considers the verb that expresses {burst a balloon} in asking whether the feature + or - Durative has grammatical correlates in Navajo. It is necessary to be very cautious with the Navajo examples, since translations are often less than satisfactory. However, the requirement that sentences have the consistent distributional properties of their situation types, Smith notes, " should keep them from straying too far afield " (Smith, 1996).

Smith then presents the range of situation types, and makes some lexical distinctions. She notes that people can talk about situations from more than one point of view, and this flexibility is essential to the aspectual

component of language. Speakers may present a situation as a whole, with a broad view. Or they may take a narrow view, talking about the endpoints or the middle of a situation. One situation may be seen as a subpart of another, as belonging to a pattern of situations (habituals), as a member of a class of situations (generics); there are also nonstandard aspectual choices (See Smith 1983/1996). She suggests that the broad view of a situation represents a basic-level categorization for English and some other languages (Smith 1991). This may not be the case for Navajo, however.

Morphemes such as *begin* and *stop* give a narrow view of a situation: this is their function. In contrast, other lexical morphemes contribute to determining the type of situation presented. It is useful to have terms for this distinction. Smith refers to morphemes that give a narrow view of a situation as "super lexical" morphemes, and other (relevant) morphemes as "lexical" morphemes. Thus the English inceptive verbs *begin*, *start*, the continuatives *in the process of*, *continue*, and the terminatives *stop*, *finish*, are all super lexical morphemes. Narrow-view morphemes, then, make a different kind of semantic contribution than do other lexical morphemes. The distinction has been noted by many scholars, in many different terms. Discussing the Russian system, for instance, Forsyth (1970) calls certain morphemes "procedural" because they "leave unaltered the basic meaning of the original verb" In contrast, other morphemes "modify the meaning of a verb to produce a lexical derivative. . . a new verb denoting a type of action different from that denoted by the original verb. " Thus, in the Russian examples above, Smith points out, the prefix *za-* of *zagovorit'* begin to speak, is a procedural morpheme, while the prefix *u-* of *ugovorit*, convince, is lexical because it contributes to a verb denoting a different sort of situation. This is precisely the difference between "lexical" and "super lexical" morphemes (Smith, 1991).

The term "aspectual" has also been used for narrow-view morphemes. Smith mentions that the distinction between lexical and super lexical is useful in considering the information about situations that is conveyed by verb constellations. She notes that a third type of morpheme should also be recognized: there are morphemes which are required formally in a given context, but which make no identifiable semantic contribution. Smith calls such morphemes "formal" to distinguish them from those which contribute to the semantics of a verb or verb constellation (1996).

Osten Dahl's (1985) cross-linguistic study on aspect also comes up with no unifying definition. He proposes that cross-linguistic verbal inflectional categories are "associated with a cluster of semantic and morpho-syntactic features, although no subset of this cluster can be singled out as providing necessary-and-sufficient conditions defining the category [of aspect] (35)." Brinton (1988) notes also that the term aspect has been used in diverse ways, and that no single definition of the concept has come to be accepted. She points out that two very different phenomena are often being termed aspect: 'aspect' and 'aktionsart'. She states:

"Aspect is a matter of the speaker's viewpoint or perspective on a situation. The speaker may choose to portray an event as completed (perfective aspect), or as ongoing (imperfective aspect), or as beginning (inceptive aspect), continuing (continuative aspect), ending (egressive aspect), or repeating (iterative aspect). ..[the second way or 'aktionsart'] concerns not the point of view of the speaker, but the inherent nature of the situation portrayed: whether it is static or dynamic, punctual or durative, bounded or unbounded, continuous or iterative. Aspect defined in this way is more correctly called by the German term

‘Aktionsart’ or ‘kind of action’. Aktionsart is an indication of the intrinsic temporal qualities of a situation...” (p. 30).

Brinton further notes that the common distinction between grammatical and lexical aspect reflects these two definitions. Grammatical aspect is manifested by verbal inflectional morphology, whereas ‘aktionsart’ or lexical aspect, is expressed by the lexical meaning of verbs and derivational morphology (both, however, may be signaled by aspectual morphemes). ‘Aspect’ in this sense, is considered to be subjective, because the speaker selects a particular viewpoint, whereas ‘aktionsart’ is objective, because it concerns the given nature of the event and *not* the perspective of the speaker. ‘Aktionsart’ is the character of the situation identified by the verb (Ibid.).

The writers discussed above are all seeking to define the cross-linguistic category of aspect through a combination of formal (morphological) and semantic factors. In doing so they raise a number of issues. In her study of Navajo, Midgette (1987) points out that all writers on the subject of aspect do recognize a different “level” of semantic definition of aspect, even if they do not acknowledge a separate name for it (Ibid.). This “level” was defined by Vendler (1957), who categorized all English verbs into different “classes” (state, activity, achievement, accomplishment). These verb classes are clearly lexical in nature, and this classification determines how they will interact with the inflectional system. Further complications arise in the fact that the line between “lexicon” and “inflection” is actually a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Bybee 1985, Midgette 1987). There does however seem to be general agreement among writers in the field that despite problems, aspect (the inflectional level) and aktionsart (the lexical level) must be analyzed as separate levels, whatever terms are used to describe them.

Many linguists still follow the initial formulation of the parameters of the category of aspect put forward by Slavicists: perfective (completed action) versus imperfective (uncompleted action). Midgette (1987: 26) summarizes some of the definitions of what she calls the “primary semantic contrast in defining aspect” as follows:

<u>perfective</u>	<u>imperfective</u>
nondurative	durative
completed	uncompleted
total view	partial view
point	line
external perspective	internal perspective

The semantics of the category of aspect are defined by the opposition of perfective and imperfective verb forms both in morphology and in meaning.

2.1.1 Aspect in Athabascan

In the Athabascan languages, aspect is an important subsystem of language that can mark the temporal contour of events by means of inherent lexical meanings in the verb and/or grammatical morphology. Whereas in English most aspectual ideas are expressed by modifying verbs with adverbs, and by choice of lexical items, in Athabascan they are manifested structurally as part of the verb. Within Athabascan linguistics the terminology used can also vary quite a bit. Athabascan languages have a complex system of verb inflection including what the Athabascan literature refers to as “mode”: an inflectional system which qualifies the nature of the action in an abstract way. In the Athabascan literature, the imperfective, perfective, future and optative have been traditionally lumped together under the term “mode”. Rice (2000) refers to two major types of aspect in Athabascan as “situation aspect”

and “viewpoint aspect” following Smith (1983, 1991). Situation aspect, as discussed earlier, is used to designate the internal temporal organization of the situation described by the verb, therefore situation aspect describes the temporal unfolding of an event/state regardless of anyone viewing (Rice, 2000). Viewpoint aspect permits the speaker to package an event/state with respect to an external viewpoint. Rice further notes that viewpoint aspect represents a more general category than situation aspect.

The assignment of aspect is part of a process which involves assigning an aspectual derivational string of prefixes plus a particle to the underlying form, resulting in the verb base. Then it can be conjugated in a particular inflection. Crosslinguistically, there is a “universal tendency for situation aspect to be realized derivationally or closer to the verb, and viewpoint aspect to be realized inflectionally, or further from the verb.” (2000: 283). Others such as Bybee (1985), use the terms ‘telic/atelic’ to represent the same. In this study I follow Rice’s terms in relation to aspect.

The imperfective may be translated by the English present, present progressive, past, or past progressive, depending on its context. The perfective aspect is often translated in active verbs to the English simple past, but in descriptive verbs often to the English present. The optative is used much like the European subjunctive to express volitional ideas. There is much variation in the use of optative across languages. The future corresponds to the English future. The aspects are inflected by the use of an aspectual prefix in addition to an allomorph of the verb stem. In Gwich’in sometimes both, or either ways of inflecting the aspects are used as the following examples 1) and 2) illustrate:

1)

ih- kaa ‘I carry water’

1sg Subject- carry water (in a dishpan or kettle) IMPF

ii- kajj 'I carried water'

1 sg Subject- carry water (in a dishpan or kettle) PERF

h-ih-kaa 'I will carry water'

FUT-1 sg Subject- carry water (in dishpan or kettle)

2)

àł-shol 'I blow'

1sg Subject-blow IMPF

dh-àł-shol 'I blew'

dh PERF- 1sg Subject-blow PERF

h-àł-shol 'I will blow'

FUT-1sg Subject-blow FUT

òł-shol 'I wish to blow'

OPT 1sg Subject-blow OPT

(Peter, 1979, Garnett, 2001)

2.1.2 Survey of Athabascan verb structure

The structure of the Athabascan verb consists of a stem and a series of prefix positions, each of which carries its own meaning and functions in inflectional, derivational, or lexical ways (e.g., Kari 1979). The prefixes are highly interdependent. The basic unit of the verb is the "verb theme." The theme consists of a stem and a set of prefixes. The theme is the lexical framework of the verb and is the form of the entry into the lexicon. Additionally, the stem specifies for a given theme a particular aspect,

according to its phonological shape and the stem set to which it belongs. Each inflectional aspect category is historically a suffix which combines with a root to form the stem. The prefixes which are part of the theme add various semantic components, some adverbial, some locative and relational, some nominal, which combined with (not added to) the stem and aspect meaning generate the specific theme meaning (Ibid.).

For example, in Gwich'in:

3)

	ch'ih'aa		'I'm eating something'
verb theme:	o (object) - ø (classifier) -'aa (stem)		
	ch'-	- ih -	- 'aa
inflected form:	object (something) - 1 sg. Subject - stem IMPF		

A verb theme is necessarily abstract because it never occurs as a spoken form without derivational or inflectional modification. Verb themes are a part of both inflectional and derivational systems. Any verb theme can be inflected by inflectional prefixes for subject, object and mode. Inflectional systems allow for flexibility in communication without changing the theme meaning, i.e., the inflectional possibilities of a given theme are all parts of the same lexeme (Tennenbaum 1978, Kari 1979).

2.1.3 Aspect in discourse

One of the first writers on the function of aspect in discourse was Weinreich (1973), who laid the foundations for many others. His ideas were that aspects can function as markers of textual functions, and he discussed the use of aspect as a "foregrounding" technique. Hopper (1979) goes even further to claim that aspect should be defined primarily in terms of its

discourse function, which, in narrative discourse, is to distinguish between “the language of the actual story line and the language of the supportive material which does not itself narrate the main events” (213). He states that this function is “a universal of narrative discourse” no matter how it is manifested. He sees foregrounding as a function of the use of perfective.

Axelrod (1993) briefly investigates the question of aspect as a structuring device in an Athabascan language, applying discourse analysis to it. In her analysis of both viewpoint and situation aspect in Koyukon, her findings provide tentative support to those of Hopper (1979). However, ultimately, she concludes, on the basis of an analysis of a Koyukon narrative, that though the aspect system does structure and organize information in discourse in Koyukon, this function is secondary. Specifically, she states “The area in which the aspectual system functions its fullest [in Koyukon] is the more local domain of sentence and verb semantics [as opposed to at the discourse level, beyond the sentence]” (p.158).

Midgette (1987), is the only other study I know of that investigates aspect in discourse with regard to an Athabascan language (in that case, Navajo). Axelrod, Hopper, and Midgette, all individually discuss the need for a greater number of studies across languages.

Several cross-linguistic studies have already demonstrated the role that tense and aspect play in identification of events that move the story forward (Hopper 1979, 1982) and in narrative structure. Crosslinguistically, events associated with verbs with perfective aspect are usually identified as the foreground, and events associated with verbs which have imperfective aspect are usually identified as the background since they support or comment on the narrated foreground events (Hopper 1979: 215). Perfective is used primarily to relate narrative events and imperfective to provide ongoing or background

information. Foreground and background, as concepts which portray narrative perspectives on which parts of the story are salient and which parts are presented as supporting material, interact with aspectual meaning of words (Ibid.).

Hopper identifies the sections of the narrative that are foregrounded as being marked by perfective aspect, and the supporting material as background, marked with imperfective aspect, stating that the function of viewpoint aspect is to highlight and organize the information in a narrative. He further goes on to posit that this function of aspect in discourse may be "a universal of narrative discourse" (1979: 213). He additionally notes that it is common for languages to realize the foreground-background distinction through verbal morphology. This co-occurrence of form and context contributes part of the meaning of the form in highlighting certain information and helping to structure discourse.

MacLean (1995) looks at the function of aspect in Inupiaq narratives as one means of determining structure. Specifically, following Hopper, she discusses how the foregrounding and backgrounding of events (as determined by viewpoint aspect) have been used to structure two Inupiaq narratives. Her analysis finds that the perfective is used primarily to relate narrative events, and that the imperfective is used to provide background information.

In summary, the category of aspect as a discourse function is an inflectional verbal system which serves to define the temporal dimension of verbal assertions, distinguishing those which serve as units of a particular type of discourse from those which do not and which form an enriching or elaborating background instead. By contrast, a tense system serves to set the assertions which are units in some sort of ordering relation. An aspect system can be defined as an inflectional system which imposes a temporal boundary

on actions, and a tense system as one which orders or anchors those actions in various ways (Midgette 1987). As Midgette points out in her study of Navajo, by contrasting an Athabascan system in which notions of "boundedness" are prominent, with the English one, more dominated by the image of a timeline running from past to future, it is possible to isolate two types of systems with differing functions. In Athabascan, the "shaping" function takes precedence and in English, the "anchoring" one. In this sense it's possible to distinguish "tense-prominent" languages, in which these anchoring functions are the default system, from "aspect prominent ones" (Ibid.). Gwich'in would be an example of an aspect prominent language.

Viewpoint aspect is an inflectional system which applies productively to almost all active verbs in Athabascan languages. In narration, it serves to define the aspect of each assertion, which according to Midgette (1987), creates the discourse units which structure the mental time recreated in the story.

2.2 Discourse analysis

Stubbs (1983) points out that the term 'discourse analysis' itself is ambiguous. He provides the general definition of it as "the study of the organization of language above the sentence, or above the clause, and therefore the study of larger linguistic units such as conversational exchanges or written texts." (p. 1,3). Schiffrin (1987: 313) defines discourse as "a product of several interlocking components: exchange, action, and idea structures, an information state, and a participation framework." She also notes that "the narrative is a naturally bound unit of discourse in which both formal and functional aspects of variation can be examined in a controlled and systematic way" (1981: 45).

Much of the fascination of discourse analysis derives from the

realization that the boundaries of linguistics are being redrawn. It has sometimes been maintained that there is no linguistic organization above the sentence level, but Stubbs argues that to maintain this would be to "maintain the odd position that conversation or written text consists of unordered strings of utterances" (1983 p.15). In fact, he points out that people are very capable of distinguishing between a random list of sentences and a coherent text, and it is the principles and rules underlying this recognition of coherence which make up the topic of study for discourse analysts.

The assumption is that discourse has structure, and this then provides the basis for investigating the organization of discourse with traditional linguistic concepts. However, Stubbs points out that discourse structure may not necessarily be specifically linguistic. The structure may be the surface manifestation of much more general organization, including the causal relation between events in the world and our inferences about such events (Ibid.). In examining discourse or narrative sequence, we are dealing with the distribution of whole clauses relative to each other, and with the way in which speakers' states of knowledge influence such distributions. Stubbs states that there are "no well-developed methods for analyzing narrative structure." (p.32 f.) Work has been done on analyzing narratives, but there is little consensus on how one might go about the analysis. Further exploration of narratives in terms of structure can contribute to overall knowledge in this area.

Context may be cultural in terms of shared meanings, social in terms of definitions of self and one's role in the production of discourse, and cognitive in terms of past experiences and knowledge (Ibid.). Topic relations in a narrative involve the organization of what is being talked about, or what the story is about. Functional relations "concern the roles which ideas play vis-à-

vis one another, and within the overall text.” (Ibid. p 45). The notion of functional relations is important for a discussion on the structure of narratives. As Hopper (1979: 213) informs us, there are different parts of a narrative “which relate events belonging to the skeletal structure of the discourse” and to the language of the story line.

Labov (1972) proposed that all narratives have sequences, or episodes, (that this is universal) and a fully developed narrative may have the following elements (363):

Abstract: what was this about?

Orientation: who what when where?

Complicating Action : then what happened?

Evaluation: so what?

Resolution: what finally happened?

Coda (optional): what is the relation to the present context?

According to Labov, the abstract is a short summary of the whole story; it encapsulates the point of the story (Ibid.). The orientation identifies the time, place, story participants and the setting where the story begins. The complicating action “consists of the set of narrative events” reported in narrative clauses that together comprise the backbone of the story. The complicating action section may also include orientation clauses or evaluation clauses. Evaluation communicates the point of the story to the audience. Evaluation can be external or internal and it can be dispensed throughout the telling. When the narrator exits the story to make a comment about any event or participant in the story, an external evaluation has been made. Labov identifies repetition as an effective evaluation device because “it intensifies a particular action, and it suspends the action.” The result or resolution answers

the question of what finally happened to the participants in the story. The coda signals that the story is over, and is considered to be an optional element.

2.2.1 Narrative definition

The narrative is a naturally bound unit of discourse, but definitions of narrative can vary quite a bit. According to Labov (1972), narratives, as linguistic representations of past experiences either real or imagined, contain stories with chronologically related events experienced by the characters in the story. He has also defined it as one method of recapitulating experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the events which occur (359). Finnegan (1992: 13) discusses the term's use in a wider sense, saying that narratives "perhaps more often have the sense of fiction, novels, myths, tales and legends" but that the term has been applied to other media too. Schneider (2003) believes that the definition of narrative as applying exclusively to chronologically related events is a very western concept, and that indeed narrative can consist of any written or orally constructed explanation used to relate past experience. Barthes (1975: 37) provides the following summary:

There are countless forms of narrative in the world...Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, comedy, pantomime, paintings, stained glass windows, movies, local news, and conversation. Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of people; there is not, there never has been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups...narrative remains largely unconcerned with good or bad

literature. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural.

To summarize, though there are differences in how broadly the term narrative is used, narratives are naturally bound units of discourse (Ibid.), and I accept Schneider's definition in this paper.

2.2.2 Ethnopoetics

Ethnopoetics is a multidisciplinary approach to the study of narratives which has been developed especially to analyze from many angles, and discuss narratives of nonwestern peoples (Hymes 1981, Woodbury 1987). It incorporates linguistic, sociolinguistic, anthropological and philological approaches to the study of narrative. It involves "discovering the traditional forms of narratives through attention to the grouping of phrases, lines and sets of lines" (Hymes 1990: 220). Hymes mentions that in examining narratives, a distinct rhetorical pattern usually pervades the text. Poetic form refers to the organization of the narrative in terms of lines, verses, stanzas, scenes, acts and parts; and rhetorical form refers to the organization in terms of sequences of action.

The approach of ethnopoetics assumes that narrative can only be accurately portrayed by finding the relationship between language function and language form. Analyses conducted under this assumption are guided by two interdependent principles, 1) that there is a structure to the narrative under study; and 2) that it is to be found in terms of "form-meaning covariation, taking form here to be linguistic form" (Hymes 1981: 151). The discovery of a consistent pattern within a narrative depends on a relation between linguistic elements and narrative form. The understanding of the nature of the relation is facilitated by the expectation that a linguistic

element, such as a shift in verb form to reflect viewpoint aspect, may have a function in the context of a narrative field (Ibid.).

In his structural analyses of numerous Native American texts, Hymes was able to discover that there is a common pattern in the mode of organization of each narrative. He found that there is use of recurring markers to indicate units within each organization of narrative (Hymes 1981). For most of the Native American texts analyzed by Hymes, the criteria for identification of lines may include a) presences of a verb, b) repetition of form or content, c) parallelisms, and d) sequential patterns of action (Hymes 1981: 176). Verses are groupings of lines and the criteria for identification of verses may include a) recurrent initial particles, b) shared content as well as shared perception and orientation, c) verbal repetition, d) contrast with what precedes and follows them, e) temporal words, or f) a turn at talk. I found parts of Hymes' methods to be useful with my analysis of viewpoint aspect, specifically in relation to a) presence of a verb and e) use of temporal words or indicators.

3. Data and methods

In this section I identify the data source, discuss the narrative, and present the methods I used in analyzing the narrative structure and in identifying and marking the distribution of viewpoint aspect throughout the narrative.

3.1 Data

The data on which this project is based come from a narrative text in Gwich'in which was presented by Lillian Garnett (2001) in a Gwich'in language class. Garnett was my teacher and has a deep knowledge of her language as it is her first language. I worked with her to develop the interlinear translation of the text, *Tr'injaa*. This text is presented in the appendices (appendix II).

Tr'injaa, is an original narrative by Katherine Peter (1975) written in Gwich'in. There are no previous written translations of this text that I am aware of. It is not a traditional story, but more of a cultural document about the transition time of girls becoming women. However, it is more than a list of facts about what happened to girls becoming women in the old times and the particular rites and rituals surrounding this. Among other things, it communicates on a deeper level the importance of community, the power of young women in this transition period for the future existence of the community, and the entire community's relationship to the natural world. The interdependence of these states is stressed, and the contrast between individual behavior and community well-being and survival, and how easily this relationship can be thrown out of balance is emphasized.

Scollon and Scollon (1981) have discussed the importance of the contextualization of knowledge in the experience of individuals in Athabascan narratives, since knowledge for its own sake is rejected. Additionally,

presentation of authoritarian knowledge is considered to threaten the autonomy of the learner, since such knowledge can't account for all new experiences in a highly unpredictable world (Ibid.) Scollon and Scollon further discuss how it is part of an Athabascan storyteller's art (in any narrative genre) to carefully anticipate the audience, and the needs of that audience in terms of current knowledge etc. This process of contextualization of knowledge can be seen in *Tr'injaa*. While in one sense the information communicated is direct, the themes and overarching messages are indirect. Since overt communication of this kind of knowledge is rejected, the narrator relies on structure and exploits other means in creating emphasis and communicating significant points, thus guiding the audience in their interpretation of the narrative.

Gwich'in narratives also make frequent use of quotative constructions (McGary, 1984). The Gwich'in verb stem meaning "say" is *nyaa* (imperfective). In reporting direct quotations in Gwich'in, one must include in the verb not only inflection for subject but also inflection for object, the object being either the person spoken to or the thing spoken about. Thus in the texts dialogue usually concludes with quotatives such as: *yahnyaa* "he/she said to/about him/her/it," *goovahnyaa* "he/she/it said to them," or *giyahnyaa* "they said to/about him/her/it." Some of the most commonly occurring quotatives in narratives I have looked at are *goorahnyaa* "we (indefinite) say about them" and *googahnyaa* "they say about them", and *varahnyaa* "we say about him/her/it." These three I have heard translated as simply "they say." *Gwinyaa* "It is said," is a third person singular form with the abstract areal prefix *gw-* which refers to time, space, or process. It seems that *Gwinyaa* is used when the preceding statement refers to an impersonal topic such as a place, a situation, or an event.

I have included quotatives as part of my verb inventory in the narrative, though there is some question about whether this should be done, since some have argued they are used only for evidential force. "Quotative" is a term denoting words that mark certain utterances as having been said by someone other than the narrator, but also as used in Gwich'in, these words characterize the narrative as a recounting rather than as the original thought or invention of the narrator, i.e. they function as an evidential marker. I have decided to include quotatives in my analysis as to leave them out for the purposes of analysis seems to alter the original story as told by the speaker.

3.2 Methods

There are two main theoretical frameworks which I examined in carrying out this analysis, Hopper's work on the function of aspect in foregrounding and organizing discourse, and Labov's theory of universal narrative structure.

Initially, Garnett and I did an interlinear translation of the text. I then did three major processes: 1) I looked at the overall structure of the narrative and isolated what seemed to be major units with Garnett's assistance (this was based upon speaker intuition) 2) I looked at each line of the story individually that contained a verb to determine which lines seemed to group together, and if these corresponded to the larger units isolated in the first process 3) I identified and categorized each verb in the story into viewpoint aspect, future, and optative. As discussed earlier, viewpoint aspect indicates whether the verb has a value of completed or non-completed view of the action, i.e. the contrast between the use of perfective and imperfective.

In analyzing the verbs in Gwich'in, I looked at both meaning and form. Though many contrasts in viewpoint aspect can be seen in verb stem variation, and there are some identifiable prefixes which indicate viewpoint

aspect, this is not always the case. In some verbs, the same stem form is used for perfective and imperfective, and some verbs lack either perfective or imperfective forms entirely. The future can also have a distinctive stem form (but not always) and generally has a distinctive identifiable prefix. Viewpoint aspect markers such as *dai'* or other aspectual words can occur in sentences with verbs which lack different forms to express viewpoint aspect.

An example of an analyzed verb in Gwich'in is as in 4) below:

4)

gee-gwa-h-al-dak

pl Object - areal - FUT -1sg Subject-talk about FUT

'I will talk about'

Defining the exact boundaries of the narrative in dividing it into sequences that grouped together, or episodes, was a more difficult process. Though Garnett intuitively organized the narrative into sections as she retold it and translated it (both in Gwich'in and English), the exact boundary where one section ended and another began was harder to define. I originally segmented the narrative based upon Garnett's telling of it, and ignoring the punctuation of the original written text (the original written text did not appear to have paragraphs). I then asked Garnett where she thought the boundaries of the narrative were. I then went back to the text and compared the punctuation in the original text to Garnett's organization of the narrative. While there was some overlap, Garnett's boundaries did not always coincide with the punctuation of the written text. I then went over the boundaries again with Garnett and she indicated a few changes which I then made.

In categorizing the verbs in the narrative which reflected the perfective/imperfective contrast, there were three categories: 1) those which were morphologically marked 2) those which were not marked directly on the verb, but had a aspect marker in proximity which defined the viewpoint

aspect (in this case *dai'*) and 3) those which were not clearly morphologically marked and had no viewpoint aspect marker in proximity. In the case of the verbs in the 3rd category, I relied on the meaning assigned to the verb by Garnett.

As mentioned previously, my analysis and discussion is confined to viewpoint (inflectional) aspect contrasts, and does not investigate the situation (lexical) aspect. This is because situation aspect reflects lexical choice of derivational morphology. Viewpoint aspect, however, potentially reflects speaker choice and so is of interest as a narrative structuring device.

I then looked at Labov's proposed universals for narrative structure. After my initial analysis, I organized the narrative into even larger sequences and in doing so was aided by the research on narrative done by Labov (1972), and Labov and Waletzky (1967) in seeking to identify the various sections, and in evaluating Labov's proposed universal narrative structure in terms of the Gwich'in narrative. In the line by line translation of the text, the top line presentation is in Gwich'in, the second line presentation is a literal translation of the Gwich'in, the third line is a free translation. The verb in each line appears in boldface with viewpoint aspect in parentheses. I looked at the overall structure of the text and then distribution of viewpoint aspect throughout the text (i.e. the context of occurrence), and asked questions as to why shifts in aspect occurred at certain points.

The organization of the narrative "Tr'injaa" which this study examines, then, is based on an analysis of the text into lines, then major episodes with Garnett, and then using Labov's proposed universal structure. Observance of shifts in viewpoint aspect as indicated by the form of the verb within the text, was a third process, informed largely by the work of Hopper and Hymes. According to Hymes, the criteria for grouping lines into episodes may include

a) the use of rhetorical pattern b) centering of direct quotation, and c) linguistic markers, d) sequential patterns of action and e) use of temporal words, which would reflect the aspectual content (1981: 231) and I have focused here mainly on linguistic markers as well as items d) and e). In Gwich'in, in addition to the use of 'temporal words', the form of the verb often shifts with viewpoint aspect.

Therefore, my findings about the use of viewpoint aspect in this narrative structure are drawn from the sources discussed above.

4. Analysis and observations

This section includes my analysis and observations of the discourse structure of the the narrative "Tr'injaa", an examination of viewpoint aspect in the narrative, and an examination of the narrative in terms of the universal discourse structure proposed by Labov (1972) (appendix I) .

4.1 Viewpoint aspect in narrative structure

The précis of the narrative *Tr'injaa* appears below, the full narrative in translation appears in appendix II.:

Introduction

The narrator states the topic she intends to tell about, that of the transition period when girls become women, the taboos surrounding this event, the treatment of the girls, and the overall significance.

(6 IMPF, 1 FUT) 86 percent IMPF forms

Episode I lines 8 - 22

This episode covers some of the particular ways in which the Ts'ehch'ii were taken care of and treated within the community as well as the consequences the Ts'ehch'ii might face if they chose to violate the customs. Wearing long hats, being sequestered, keeping the gaze focused downward, being closely watched.

(12 IMPF, 2 PERF, 1 FUT) 80 percent IMPF forms

Episode II lines 23 - 46

This section begins to explain the reasons for this treatment. Explaining how it wasn't easy to just go and buy food back then, how much people really needed food. How they lived off the land- food they hunted was all they had.

(16 IMPF, 2 PERF, 6 FUT) 67 percent IMPF forms

Episode III lines 47 - 65

Yet more specific details are provided about the conditions the Ts'ehch'ii must observe which reinforces the significance of the previous information. That they weren't allowed to be around food fresh from the hunt, or to eat it, or eat warm food. And that they sew a great deal while in the month of confinement.

(16 IMPF, 2 PERF, 1 FUT) 84 percent IMPF forms

Episode IV lines 66 - 78

This section provides critical information about the way in which the misbehavior of the Ts'ehch'ii can impact the entire community through affecting the ability of hunters. It provides the reasons for the special treatment and conditions the Ts'ehch'ii are given, through consequences for them, and the whole community.

(10 IMPF, 2 PERF) 83 percent IMPF forms

Episode V lines 79 - 94

This episode deals with the resolution of the Ts'ehch'ii status in terms of their reentry into society and and ultimately marriage, the goal of the Ts'ehch'ii

(12 IMPF, 2 PERF, 2 FUT) 75 percent IMPF forms

Episode VI lines 95 - 112

This episode marks a digression, but still on the topic of marriage, and so still related to the goal.

(9 IMPF, 4 PERF, 3 FUT) 56 percent IMPF forms

As mentioned in the methods section, the original divisions of the narrative were based upon speaker's intuition, as indicated by Garnett.

An overview of the previous information can be seen in summary in the following table:

Table 1: Viewpoint Aspectual Inventory Overview

	Total Verbs Per Episode	IMPF	PERF	FUT
Intro	7	6 (86%)	0	1 (14%)
Episode I	15	12 (80%)	2 (13%)	1 (7%)
Episode II	24	16 (67%)	2 (8%)	6 (25%)
Episode III	19	16 (84%)	2 (11%)	1 (5%)
Episode IV	12	10 (83%)	2 (17%)	
Episode V	16	12 (75%)	2 (12%)	2 (13%)
Episode VI	16	9 (56%)	4 (25%)	3 (19%)

This table summarizes the distribution of viewpoint aspect throughout the narrative. One can see in terms of percentages where the concentrations of imperfective versus perfective forms fall in each episode. A higher concentration of imperfective forms occur in certain episodes as opposed to others. In terms of Hopper's notions of foreground and background, this table summarizes which sections of the narrative could be considered foregrounded as identified by the choice of viewpoint aspect. (I have included the future in this table for interest though I do not focus on the use of the future in this analysis.)

I did a line by line analysis of the narrative, so that I could see the pattern of viewpoint aspect use throughout, and this appears below (the verbs

and aspect markers appear in bold, the viewpoint aspect for the clause as a whole appears in parentheses):

Line by Line Analysis of Text “Tr̃injàa” With Viewpoint Aspectual Inventory

Introduction

- 1 Nich'it tr̃injàa **ilik**
girl woman she becomes (IMPF)
when a girl becomes a woman
- 2 chan **geegwahaldak**
also I will talk about (FUT)
I will also talk about
- 3 Aii nahts'ah' ts'à' **gook'eegahtii** izhik ree.
that's how they take care of them then. (IMPF)
how they take care of them back then
- 4 Ts'ehch'ji chan ree **goorahnyàa**,
Taboo also too they called them (IMPF)
they were also called Taboo
- 5 tr̃injàa tr'ook'it **gilik**
woman first they become (IMPF)
when they first become a woman
- 6 ts'à' it'ee ts'ehch'ji **goorahnyàa**
and now taboo we say (IMPF)
they are called taboo now we say
- 7 **t'igwinyaa** dahlji
its assumed could be (IMPF)
its assumed that they could be taboo

EPISODE I

- 8 gaa ts'eh yuunjyaa **goonaga'ak**
but hat it's long they put on them (PERF)

but they put a long hat on them

9 **goorahnyàa**

we say about them (IMPF)

we say

10 Jidii njyaa nilij ts'à' oodòk **gogwahqah'yàa** kwàa

it's long and above they will see not (FUT)

it's long so that they can't see above it

11 duuyee chiitajj gaa **gogwahqah'in**

never outside but they see (IMPF)

they never can see outside (during this period)

12 Oo'òk, ye'eedàk geetak hee zhee kat gwa'àn **tr'agwahqah'in**

out there way up sometimes sky around we see (IMPF)

we can look around way up out there in the sky

13 aii gwik'it gaa duuyee **t'igii'in**

that like it but never they do it (IMPF)

but they (the young women) never do that

14 **goorahnyàa**

we say about them (IMPF)

we say

15 Aiiis'à' lyaa gwintl'oo **gook'eegqahitii**

and so really a lot they take care of them, watch them (IMPF)

So they were watched really closely

16 **googahnyàa**

they say about them (IMPF)

they say

17 Aii nich'it jyaa dinjik **goiindhan dai'**

that girl that way happened she kept it a secret when (PERF)*

a girl when she did something like that and kept it secret

18 chan **gaahkhok**

then they kill them (IMPF)

19 **goorahnyàa**

we say about them (IMPF)

we say

20 Łyâa deenaadaġ' ree it'ili' gwint'oo geenjit **gwik'eegaatii**

really long time ago the most important for them they're very careful -watchful(IMPF)

way back then it was most important for them to be very careful

21 ts'à' ree aii t'ee shġh rii nankat **nagaarii**

too that food only on land they hunt (IMPF)

they only had what they hunted from the land

22 gwirii gwit'ee **gwaġhch'yaa**

only that they use (need) (IMPF)

they lived off the land (that's really all they had)

EPISODE II

23 Geh'àn gwit'ee **gwaġhch'yaa**

because they needed it (PERF)

because it's a matter of survival (they depended on it)

24 aii'ts'à' tr'injaà ilik aii zhik gwa'àn **nagaarii**

and so woman she became that there around they hunt (IMPF)

so girls becoming women around there (if) they hunt

25 gwa'àn veh'àn shġh t'eerahaadhaa kwàa

around because of her food they will find not (FUT)

they can't get food because of her

26 **giyahnyàa**

they tell her (IMPF)

27 ts'à' giyeenjit gwint'oo **gwik'eegahtii**

they for her a lot they watch out (IMPF)

they really watch out for her a lot (beware of her)

28 **t'agoorahnyàa**

we say of them (IMPF)
we say

29 Aii ts'à' jùk ree tyâa jidii datthak **gwànljì**.
So now too really what all is (IMPF)
so now too really there is (we have) everything

30 Yaaghà' zhat chan **ch'arooheekwàt**
then also we will buy (FUT)
then we will also buy something

31 chan yee'àt oo'àn **nirihee'àl**
also over there, out there we will walk and back (FUT)

32 ts'à' t'ee **ch'arooheekwàt**
and there something we will buy (FUT)
and there we can buy something

33 **ch'arahee'aa**
we're going to eat (FUT)
to eat

34 aii gwik'it **t'iginch'yaa kwàa**
that like they're thus like that not (IMPF)
that's not how it was for them

35 aii geh'àn **t'iginch'yaa**
that's because they are thus like that (IMPF)
because of that (that's why) they are the way they are

36 **t'agoorahnyàa**
thus we say about them (IMPF)
so we say

37 Aii ts'à' tsyaa **najjì** chan aii nich'it chan voondèe, vachaa **najjì gwànljì jì'**
and so young men too that girl too her older brothers her younger brothers they
exist if (IMPF) and so young men, and brothers, if she has them

38 aii tsyaa najj chan goots'ee **gee'yaa**
 those young men also they keep them away from them (IMPF)
 they keep away from them (away from the Ts'eh'chji)

39 aiiits'à' aii tsyaa najj **nagahaazhrii**
 and so those young men they will hunt (FUT)

40 gwats'à' gweedhaa **t'oonch'yaa**
 before time thus it is (IMPF)
 before it's time (for the young men to go hunting)

41 akwàt lyâa aii naii googaa chan duuyee **gagh'in**
 so really those ones even also never see them (IMPF)
 so really, even them (the hunters) they are never to look at them

42 Lyâa zhyàa dooghai' k'eiich'ii iizuy **ilik**
 really for example something bad became (IMPF)
 (see below)

43 aii k'it nich'it najj **t'agahthan hii**
 that's how girls thus they treated them apparently (PERF)*
 Apparently they treated those girls like something gone bad (rotten)

44 Aiiits'à' jùk ree akoo **digwii'in** kwàa
 so now too we do that not (IMPF)
 so we don't do that nowadays

45 Gàa lejji najj oo'ôk **gwich'ji**
 but many of them out there living (IMPF)
 but many of them who are living out there

46 najj googaa jyahts'a' **gwik'eegahtii**
 they anyway about that they're watchful (IMPF)
 they're still cautious about it anyway

EPISODE III

47 Izhik **dai'** gwanaa jyaa **digwinyàa**
 during that time that's us in general said (PERF)
 that's the way it was then

48 ts'à' duuyee chan zhik gwa'àn shìh alii at'oohju
 and never also then around food fresh just a little while ago
 (see below)

oo'èe **neeraqachji**
 over from hunt they brought in(PERF)
 they were never around fresh game just brought from the hunt

49 chan duuyee **ga'aa**
 also never they eat (IMPF)
 and they never eat it either

50 Łyâa duuyee **googiyah'aa**.
 really never they feed it to them(IMPF)
 they truly never feed that kind of food to them

51 Niłji dhagaii aii k'it t'inch'ii kwaii rii chan **googah'aa**
 meat dried things like that only also they can eat (IMPF)
 they can only eat things like dried meat

52 Aiiits'à' chan **k'eech'agaahkaii**
 and so also they sew (IMPF)

53 aii gwizhit **gaadii**
 while inside they are sitting (IMPF)
 (see below)

54 datthak t'ee **k'eech'agaahkaii**
 all that they sew (IMPF)
 they sew everything while sitting inside

55 Ts'à' **k'ee gwiichy'aa**
 and they make stuff (IMPF)

56 daganli' haa **t'igii'in**
 their hands with thus they do it (IMPF)
 they do it with their hands

57 Oozhèe k'iizhàk **gogwàah'in**
 down under (direction) they see (IMPF)

58 gwirii ree **gogwàah'in**
 only too they see (IMPF)
 they can only see downward

59 akwat izhik t'ee **k'èech'agaahkaii**
 so under there they sew (IMPF)

60 ts'à' gwintl'oo lejji **k'èegaahkaii**
 and a great deal they sew (IMPF)
 and they sew a great deal

61 **goorahnyàa**
 we say of them (IMPF)

62 T'ee shreenan ch'ihlak gwit'ee **gaadii**
 month one underneath (hidden) they sit (IMPF)
 they stay in seclusion for a month

63 **goorahnyàa**
 we say of them (IMPF)

64 Aaiis'à' chan shih nindhàa chan **googah'aa kwàa**
 and so also food warm also they eat not (IMPF)
 they can't eat warm food either

65 **googahnyàa**
 they say of them (IMPF)

66 Aaiits'à' aii tr̃injàa jěinch'yaa gwiizhik zhik gwa'àn shǐh alii **in'al jǐ'**
and so that woman like that while there around food fresh she ate if (PERF)
so during this time if she's around fresh food and she ate some

67 aii jùu **yiik'ee**
whoever killed it (PERF)

68 **ch'eeyahahk'ee**
will miss when shooting (FUT)
will have bad luck hunting

69 **ginyàa**
they say (IMPF)

70 Aii gwits'ǐ' t'ee shǐh lii **googah'àa** kwàa,
that food fresh they eat not (IMPF)
that fresh food they cannot eat it

71 **ginyàa**
they say (IMPF)

72 Aaiits'à' ninyuk gwit'ee **gaadii dai'**
and so long time under (hidden) they sit (PERF)*
so for a long time they stay hidden

73 chan goonǐn kak gwiizuu kwàa **googahnyàa**
when also their faces on bad not they say of them (IMPF)
it's not that bad for their faces they say

74 ts'à' chan daagajǐ **goorahnyàa**
and also white we say of them (IMPF)
they also get white we say

75 Aaiits'à' aii t'ee jùk k'eejit najǐ gwint'oo sungajǐ k'eich'ii akajǐ kwaii **ga'àa jǐ'**
so that now young people lots of sweet things they eat if (IMPF)
so now too if young people eat a lot of sugar and sweet things

76 goonin kat datthak **khagweheedaa**
 their faces on all get pimply (IMPF)
 they get pimples

77 Aii t'ee gwinth'oo k'eich'ii akaji kwaii **ga'aa** geh'an
 that too much things sweet they eat because (IMPF)
 because of eating too much sweets

78 Aaiits'à' aii jyaa **digeheech'yaa** gwits'i'
 so like that happens to them away (FUT)
 so that it won't happen to them too

79 goonin **k'eegahtii** t'iginch'yaa
 their faces they watch thus like they that (IMPF)
 they watch their faces for signs of it

80 **googahnyaa**
 they say of them (IMPF)

EPISODE V

81 Aaiits'à' t'ee ree jùu tr'injaa **ilik dai'**
 and so who woman became when (PERF)
 and so whoever became a woman

82 **zhat dai'** t'ee year **haagiindaii** kwaa
 at that time year they knew about not (PERF)
 at that time they didn't know for a year

83 Aaiits'à' jùu tr'injaa ilik aiit'ee t'ee **tr'ooheendal nagwadhak**
 and so who woman becomes later marriage will happen (FUT)
 and so whoever becomes a woman will marry afterward (it becomes time to marry)

84 ts'à' **giyaandaii**
 and they know about it
 and they know it (IMPF)

85 Aiit'ee t'ee dinjii **yuundak**
 later on a man will marry her (FUT)

86 Akòò aii chan ginkhii nihtee **gavachik** kwàa
 if also the preacher joins them not (IMPF)
 if the preacher doesn't marry them

87 zhyàa nihts'à' **nihdèega'òò**
 just they move in together (IMPF)
 they just move in together

88 **goorahnyàa**
 we say of them (IMPF)

89 Aiiits'à' aii tr'iinin **igwilik**
 so a child is born (IMPF)

90 **gwinyàa**
 they say (in general) (IMPF)

91 tr'iinin **igwilik** (IMPF)
 child is born

92 ts'à' oo'òk **geegwaraandak**
 and out there its announced (IMPF)
 they announce a child is born

93 **gwinyàa**
 they say (in general) (IMPF)

94 Aiiit'ee t'ee jùu dinjii year lee **geechyaa t'agoorahnyaa** li' kwàa gwich'in
 after that whoever man year they don't count thus we say about them wonder maybe
 (IMPF)
 after that whatever man, years don't matter we say

95 aiiits'à' jùu dinjii aii nich'it **gwilik**
 and so whoever man, that girl born (IMPF)

96 **gwinyàa**
 they say (in general) (IMPF)

97 **dai' oohihdal yuunyaa**

when marry her he wanted (PERF)

whatever man wanted to marry her (a girl when she's born)

98 aii oo'ok nyə' leii oondək ts'à' yats'à' **ideech'ahthak**

that out there lots of moss he gets and for her he stucked the moss in (with a stick)(PERF)

he gathers lots of moss from out there for her, he pokes it in their house with a stick

99 **varahnyàa**

we say of him (IMPF)

100 yats'à' **nihda'ak**

he brings it in (IMPF)

101 Aii ts'à' jii kheenjit **dink'yahalthaa**

then this one for myself I will raise her (FUT)

I will raise this one for myself

102 **dink'indhat**

I raised her (PERF)*

103 t'ee **oohihdal**

after I will marry her (FUT)

104 **nyàa**

he say (IMPF)

105 **varahnyàa**

we say of him (IMPF)

106 aii dinjii jyah ts'à' t'ee **nilagoonjii**

people that's how they married each other (PERF)*

that's how people got married

107 **goorahnyàa**

we say of them (IMPF)

108 **Aii nyə' nihda'ak**
 who moss brings in (IMPF)
 who brings the moss in

t'ee tr'iinin k'il giiyaa'ii
 for baby diaper will have it (IMPF)
 for a baby's diaper will have (the baby)

110 **goorahnyàa**
 we say of them(IMPF)

111 **Aii geh'àn t'ee nyə' nihda'ak**
 that's why moss he brings it in(IMPF)
 that's why he brings moss in

112 **gwinyàa**
 it's said (IMPF)

In terms of Hopper's points I found some interesting things in relation to the use of viewpoint aspect in this particular narrative. The following numbered lines from the narrative illustrate each shift in aspect (in this case, from imperfective to perfective) which coincides with the boundary of a new episode. Most shifts in viewpoint aspect do correlate to a new episode of the narrative, see discussion below. (These lines are presented together with the lines immediately preceding and following to provide a context. For a more complete context, refer to the previous line by line analysis) :

7 **t'igwinyaa dahjji**
 its assumed could be (IMPF)
 its assumed that they could be taboo

(8) **gàa ts'eh yuunjyaa goonaga'ak**
 but hat it's long they put on them (PERF)
 they put a long hat on them

9 **goorahnyàa**

we say about them (IMPF)

we say

22 **gwirii gwit'ee gaahch'yaa**

only that they use (IMPF)

they lived off the land

(23) **Geh'àn gwit'ee gwaahch'yaa**

because they needed it (PERF)

because it's a matter of survival (they depended on it)

24 **aiits'à' tr'injàa ilik aii zhik gwa'àn nagaarii**

and so woman she became that there around they hunt (IMPF)

so girls becoming women around there they hunt

46 **najj googaa ज्याह्स'अ' gwik'eegahtii**

they anyway about that they're watchful (IMPF)

they're still careful about it anyway

(47) **Izhik dai' gwanaa ज्याa digwinyàa**

during that time that's us in general said (PERF)

that's the way it was then

48 **ts'à' duuyee chan zhik gwa'àn shih alii at'oohju**

and never also then around food fresh just a little while ago

(see below)

oo'èe neeraqachji

over from hunt they brought in(PERF)

they were never around fresh game just brought from the hunt

65 **googahnyàa**

they say of them (IMPF)

(66) Aaiits'à' aii tr'injää jëiinch'yaa gwiizhik zhik gwa'àn shǐh alii **in'al jǐ'**
and so that woman like that while there around food fresh she ate if(PERF)
so during this time if she's around fresh food and she ate some

67 aii jùu **yiik'ee**
whoever killed it (PERF)

80 **googahnyaa**
they say of them (IMPF)

(81) Aaiits'à' t'ee ree juu tr'injää **ilik dai'**
and so who woman became when (PERF)
and so whoever became a woman

82 **zhat dai'** t'ee year **haagiindaii** kwàa
at that time year they knew about not (PERF)
at that time they didn't know for a year

96 **gwinyaa**
they say (in general) (IMPF)

(97) **dai' oohihdal yuunyaa**
when marry her he wanted (PERF)
whatever man wanted to marry her (a girl when she's born)

98 aii oo'òk nya' leii oondàk ts'à' yats'à' **ideech'ahthak**
that out there lots of moss he gets and for her he stucked the moss in (with a stick)(PERF)
he gathers lots of moss from out there for her, he pushes it in their house with a stick

This second table summarizes this relationship between episode boundary and shift in viewpoint aspect, as outlined above:

Table 2: Shift In Viewpoint

	Episode	
	boundary	no boundary
shift in viewpoint	7	5
no shift in viewpoint	0	99

These data were compiled by counting the number of shifts in viewpoint aspect which occurred at an episode boundary and the number that occurred where no previously defined boundary existed. It is interesting in that a shift in viewpoint aspect occurred at each boundary in the narrative -- slightly more than half of the shifts in viewpoint aspect occurred at a boundary. So in this sense, the viewpoint aspect appears to be helping shape or define the narrative.

However, there were additionally 5 cases in which a shift in aspect did not correlate to a new episode (these five have been marked with an asterisk), and it should be noted that out of 112 verbs, there were 14 cases (counting the same verb more than once) in which viewpoint aspect was not reflected in the verb, or was not readily apparent. In some of these instances, viewpoint aspect markers in the form of separate words (aspectual words) occurred in

proximity to the verb to define the viewpoint aspect. For example:

- 81 Aiiits'à' t'ee ree jùu tr'ínjàa **ilik dai'**
 and so who woman became when
 and so whoever became a woman

The word *dai'* in this instance indicates the viewpoint aspect as perfective. In the cases where it was unclear what viewpoint aspect was reflected in the morphology, and there were no other aspectual words in proximity which would define the viewpoint aspect, the meaning that Lillian Garnett had assigned the verb in question in translation and that she felt was the correct aspect provided the viewpoint aspect meaning.

Of the 14 verbs in which the viewpoint aspect was not readily apparent, 4 of those occurred at an episode boundary, and 2 were part of the 5 in which a shift occurred, but no boundary had been defined. At this point I will discuss the shifts in viewpoint aspect and more specifically, those 5 cases in which a shift in viewpoint aspect occurred where there was no shift in episode boundary.

4.2 Aspect used to highlight significant information in the narrative

As discussed, the difference between the forms of perfective and imperfective is aspectual and thus these two forms correspond to different ways of viewing the flow of processes and states in the narrative. According to Comrie (1976: 16) events reported in perfective are viewed as “a single whole”, and so two consecutive verbs are interpreted to refer to two consecutive events, because the perfective does not distinguish between the separate phases which make up a situation. By contrast, because the imperfective allows for a breakdown of the internal temporal structure of a

situation (Ibid.), events reported in this form have more flexibility and don't directly affect temporal sequences.

In analysis within the frameworks discussed in the methods section, and going over each of the 5 cases individually (lines 17, 43, 72, 102, 106) where a shift in aspect did not coincide with a boundary, it can be seen that the perfective forms occur more frequently at certain critical points in the narrative, and less frequently throughout the entire narrative. These shifts did appear to be highlighting significant information presented in the narrative.

In the first case, in line 17, a shift to perfective does not occur at a boundary, but instead seems to be functioning to highlight the dramatic information to be presented pertaining to the misbehavior of the Ts'ehch'ii:

17 Aii nich'it jyaa dinjik **goiindhan dajj'**

that girl that way happened she kept it a secret when (PERF)*
a girl if she did something like that and kept it secret

18 chan **gaahkhok**

then they kill them (IMPF)

Line 17 begins a sequence which describes critical information important to understanding the narrative as a whole, involving the treatment of the Ts'ehch'ii, and the beliefs behind the treatment (the ultimate survival of the community). It is clear that the author does not want this information lost on the audience, and the shift in aspect seems to focus attention on this point.

Lines 23-46 do represent a shift in episode as well as in aspect, but additionally appear to be highlighting the significance of the information being communicated. This can be seen below :

23 Geh'àn gwi't'ee **gwaach'yaa**

because they needed it (PERF)

because it's a matter of survival (they depended on it)

24 aiits'à' tr'ínjàa ilik aii zhik gwa'àn **nagaarii**

and so woman she became that there around they hunt (IMPF)

so girls becoming women around there they hunt

25 gwa'àn veh'àn shìh **t'eerahaadhaa** kwàa

around because of her food they will find not (FUT)

they can't get food because of her

Special dramatic emphasis seems to be the function of the shift in aspect in line 43, where once again, there is no episode boundary but the information presented is dramatic:

42 Łyâa zhyàa dooghai' k'eich'ii iizuy **ilik**

really for example something bad becomes (IMPF)

(see below)

43 aii k'it nich'it naii **t'agathan** tii

that's how girls thus they treated them apparently (PERF)*

Apparently they treated those girls like something gone bad (rotten)

At line 72, the author seems to be drawing attention to the length of time the Ts'eh'chii must remain hidden (in seclusion):

72 Aiits'à' ninyuk gwi't'ee **gaadii dai'**

and so long time under they stayed (PERF)*

so for a long time they stay hidden (in seclusion)

The shift beginning a sequence in 102, and concluding with another shift in 106 is significant because it has to do with resolving the precarious status of the Ts'eh'chii, ultimately marriage, and thus ensuring the security (from potential starvation) of the entire community, and restoring balance to the

community. In line 102 specifically, it seems the author is pointing out dramatic information about the idea of raising someone for marriage:

102 **dink'indhat**

I raised her (PERF)*

103 **t'ee oohihdal**

after I will marry her (FUT)

106 **aii dinjii jyah ts'à' t'ee niłagoonjii**

people that's how they married each other (PERF)*

that's how people got married

The following lines represent shifts in viewpoint aspect which *do* occur at an episode boundary, but which I feel are also functioning to highlight information.

For example, at line 47 another shift in aspect takes place, which does occur at a boundary, but which seems to reinforce the previous information and again highlight the significant points of the story.

47 **Izhik dai' gwanaa jyaa digwinyàa**

during that time that's us in general said (PERF)

that's the way it was then

48 **ts'à' duuyee chan zhik gwa'àn shih alii at'oohju**

and never also then around food fresh just a little while ago

(see below)

oo'èe neerāachji

over from hunt they brought in(PERF)

they were never around fresh game just brought from the hunt

Lines 66 to 68, again involve providing critical information about the specific consequences of the misbehavior of the Ts'ehch'ii, and how this can impact the entire community through affecting the ability of the hunters, and thus bringing about starvation. Here one can also see the relationship

expressed between the community and the land. The author wishes to highlight and express the interdependence of the people with the land, and how critical this relationship was to survival. It appears that she shifts aspect to draw attention to this information. The author contrasts life back then with current life, how nowadays we don't have this critical relationship to hunting etc., how now survival doesn't depend on it: we can just go to the store. It provides reasons for the special treatment and conditions of the Ts'ehch'ii, and in doing so the author is attempting to make the audience understand those reasons (incidentally, this also demonstrates the author's awareness that primary audience for this narrative will be people who do not understand these traditions, either the younger generation, or outsiders).

66 Aai'ts'ä' aii tr'ĩnjàa jěiinch'yaa gwiizhik zhik gwa'àn shĩh alii in'al jĩ'
and so that woman like that while there around food fresh she ate if(PERF)
so during this time if she's around fresh food and she ate some

67 aii jùu yĩik'ee
whoever killed it (PERF)

68 ch'eeyahahk'ee
will miss when shooting (FUT)
will have bad luck hunting

Once again, in lines 81-96 , this episode deals with the resolution of the Ts'ehch'ii in terms of their reentry to social life; or ultimately marriage.

81 Aai'ts'ä' t'ee ree jùu tr'ĩnjàa ilik dai'
and so who woman became when (PERF)
and so whoever became a woman

82 zhat dai' t'ee year haagiindaii kwàa
at that time year they knew about not (PERF)
at that time they didn't know for a year

In lines 97-112, the episode is a digression in a sense, but still dealing with

the topic of marriage, and still presenting some fairly dramatic and unusual information.

97 dai' oohihdal yuunyaa

when marry her he wanted (PERF)

whatever man wanted to marry her (a girl when she's born)

98 aii oo'ok nya' leii oondak ts'a' yats'à' ideech'ahthak

that out there lots of moss he gets and for her he stucked the moss in (with a stick)(PERF)
he gathers lots of moss from out there for her, he pushes it in their house with a stick

In the data as a whole, 72 % of the narrative contained imperfective forms of verbs. A higher concentration of imperfective forms, 86 and 80%, were clustered in the Introduction, Episode I, and 83% and 84% in episodes III and IV. The clauses in these sections could be considered to be backgrounded (in the sense of Hopper). In episode II, there is an immediate drop in imperfective forms at the beginning of this section down to 67%. In fact, this episode and Episode VI contain the lowest percentage of imperfective forms throughout the entire narrative, thus seeming to foreground these sections.

4.3 Labov's proposed universals and narrative structure

I also briefly looked at the narrative in terms of the universal structure proposed by Labov. The distribution of verbal forms in "Tr'injaa" is consistent with Labov's proposed universals for narrative structure to a degree, in that, according to Labov, the abstract and orientation consist mostly of background information in narrative. He suggests that the complicating action and resolution sections would consist of a smaller total number of imperfective forms.

In attempting to see if the episodes in Tr'injaa correlate to Labov's identified narrative universals, I found that it was necessary to compact episodes II and III to fit into a section Labov would have considered the

complicating action, and again to compact V and VI to correlate to the resolution (see appendix I). In terms of Labov's organization, Line (1) to line (7) correlates to the abstract. Episode I beginning with line (8) coincides with what Labov would call the orientation, episodes II and line (23), and III, line (47) the complicating action, episode IV and line (66) the evaluation, and episodes V and VI corresponding to lines (79) and (95) would correlate to the resolution.

As discussed by Labov, I did find that the 'evaluation' does occur throughout the narrative "Tr'injaa", however it appeared to me that more evaluative type discourse occurred in episode IV than the other episodes, and so I chose to identify this whole episode as 'evaluation.'

5. Conclusion

To summarize these observations, I did find there to be a relationship between viewpoint aspect and narrative structure in *Tr'injaa*. That relationship is reflected in the correlation between shift in episode and shift in viewpoint aspect. Additionally, there appears to be a relationship between shift in viewpoint aspect and highlighting information in the narrative. Two functional explanations for that relationship are:

- 1) that it is a structuring device in the narrative, to delineate episodes/ organize the discourse
- 2) and, that it is a means of highlighting information for two purposes:
 - a) to draw attention to culturally significant information important to understanding the narrative as a whole, and b) to give special dramatic emphasis

While the idea that meaning can result from a relationship between form and context, and that discourse has an organization is not new, I find it interesting that these data from a Gwich'in narrative do support Hopper's conclusions about the relationship of use of perfective and imperfective to foregrounding and backgrounding respectively, and in organizing information in discourse. Viewpoint aspect can be seen as a resource which speakers can use to help represent experience in the narrative. Though in her study of Koyukon, Axelrod looked at both viewpoint and situation aspect, which I do not here, it does appear that the use of viewpoint aspect, specifically in narrative, is similar to that of Koyukon. While I did not find enough evidence within this narrative to fully support Labov's theory of universal narrative structure in Gwich'in, a greater number of narratives in Gwich'in could be examined for conclusions to be drawn in that area.

In the overall structure of the text I examined, the sequencing of

narrated events is highlighted and marked by the use of viewpoint aspect, as in Koyukon. Additionally, viewpoint aspect appears to be used as a foregrounding device, similar to that of Koyukon, to highlight significant or dramatic information in the narrative. This cross-linguistic evidence coincides with the work of others to suggest that, eventually, a universal characterization of the discourse properties of aspectual elements in natural language may be developed.

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Appendix I
Discourse Structure of Narrative
Tr'injää

ABSTRACT

Introduction lines 1-7

The narrator states the topic she intends to tell about- that of the transition period when girls become women. She discusses the taboos surrounding this event, the treatment of the girls, and the overall significance.

ORIENTATION

Episode I lines 8 - 22

This episode covers some of the particular ways in which the Ts'ehch'ji were taken care of and treated within the community, as well as the consequences the Ts'ehch'ji might face if they chose to violate the customs. Wearing long hats, being sequestered, keeping the gaze focused downward, being closely watched.

COMPLICATING ACTION

Episode II lines 23 - 46

This section begins to explain the reasons for this treatment. Explaining how it wasn't easy to just go and buy food back then, how much people really needed food. How they lived off the land- food they hunted was all they had.

Episode III lines 47 - 65

Yet more specific details are provided about the conditions the Ts'ehch'ji must observe, which reinforces also by repetition the significance of the previous information. That they weren't allowed to be around food fresh from the hunt, or to eat it, or eat warm food. And that they sew a great deal while in the month of confinement.

EVALUATION

Episode IV lines 66 - 78

This section could be considered the beginning of the evaluation. It goes into providing critical information about the way in which the misbehavior of the Ts'ehch'ji can impact the entire community through affecting the ability of hunters. It provides the reasons for the special treatment and

Appendix I
Discourse Structure of Narrative
Tr'injää

conditions the Ts'ehch'jj are given, through consequences for them, and the whole community.

RESOLUTION

Episode V lines 79 - 95

This episode deals with the resolution of the Ts'ehch'jj status in terms of their reentry into society and and ultimately marriage.

Episode VI lines 96 - 111

This episode marks a digression, but still on the topic of marriage, and so still related to the resolution.

Appendix II
Free Translation

Woman

by Katherine Peter, 1975

Translation by Lillian Garnett and Qwynten Richards, 2001

I will also talk about how a girl becomes a woman. The way they took care of them back then. Taboo, they called them, those who are first becoming women, and now taboo as we say, maybe it was assumed [about them], but they put a long hat on them, we say. It's long, and they can't see above it, they can never see outside. Out there, way up, sometimes, in the sky we can see around like that, but they [the Ts'ehch'ii] never do it, we say. And so they watched them really closely, they say. A girl like that (in that state), when something happened like that (a violation of taboo), when they kept it a secret, then they killed them, we say. A really long time ago [it was] extremely important for them [to be] very careful, since they only had what they hunted, what they got from the land, that's all they use.

Because: they needed it (depended on it), and so becoming a woman around there, [if] they hunt around [her], because of her they can't get food, they tell her, and so they really watch out for her a lot, thus we say of them. So nowadays really there is [we have] everything. There [at the store] also we will buy things, also we will go way over there and back and there we can buy [what] we're going to eat, that's not how it is for them, that's why they're like that, we say that about them. And so, young men also, that young woman [the Ts'ehch'ii], her brothers if she has them, those young men also they keep them away from them. So those young men they will hunt when it's time, so really they never see them either. Really, for example, they treated those girls like something gone bad [rotten].

Appendix II continued

And so now we don't do that anymore. But many people living out there they still are cautious about it. During that time, we say that, and additionally, never around fresh game just brought over a little while ago from the hunt, never do they [the Ts'ehch'ii] eat it. Truly never do they feed it to them. Dried meat, stuff like that only they can eat.

And so also they sew, while sitting inside, all that sewing. And they do it with their hands. They can only see downward, so they see under there, they sew and they really sew a lot, we say. For one whole month they stay under [hidden, in seclusion] we say. And so they can't eat warm food either, they say. And so if a young woman in that condition during that time is around fresh food, if she ate it, whoever killed it will miss when shooting (have bad luck hunting), it's said. That fresh food they cannot eat it it's said. So when they stay hidden a long time it's not bad for their faces, they say, and also they do become white we say. So similarly, now young people if they eat a lot of sugar and sweet things their faces get all pimply.

That's because they eat too many sweet things. So they watch out for stuff like that happening to them they say. And so whoever became a woman at that time they didn't know about it for a year. And so whoever becomes a woman after that they will marry, and they know it. After that, a man will marry her. Even though the preacher doesn't marry them they just move in together we say. And a child is born it's said, it's announced out there [when] a child is born, it's said. Later whoever man, years don't matter (?), we say of them, and so maybe, whoever man when a girl is born it's said he wanted to marry her, he gets lots of moss from out there for her, he pokes it in [the house] with a

Appendix II continued

stick we say of him, to her, he brings it in. So this one for myself I will raise her, when grown up, after that I'll marry her, he says, we say of him. People, that's how they get married they say. That moss, he who brings it in for the baby diaper will have her, they say. That's why he brings the moss in, it's said.